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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
2 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

Soul Survivors

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MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND...

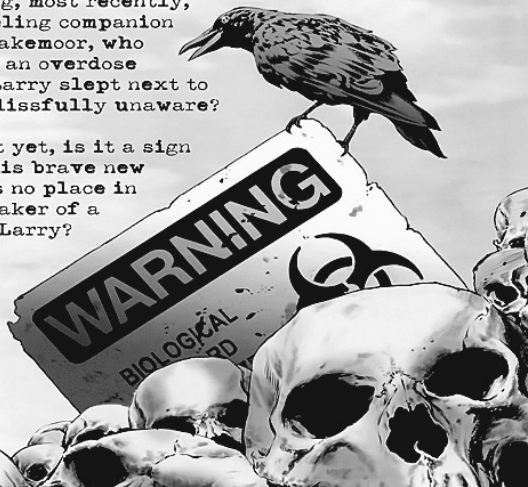
Someone at the Project Blue government facility made a mistake. And now, the deadly flu-like virus "Captain Trips" has killed off 99% of the country's population.

The survivors are tasked with living in a world they no longer understand - and making sense of the evil, faceless man that stalks them in their nightmares.

For jaded, shell-shocked singer Larry Underwood, is this dark vision a manifestation of the guilt that's shadowed him from Los Angeles to New York? The collective disappointment of all the women he's failed in his journey?

Including, most recently, his traveling companion Rita Blakemoor, who died of an overdose while Larry slept next to her, blissfully unaware?

Or, worst yet, is it a sign that this brave new world has no place in it for a taker of a man like Larry?



SOMEWHERE IN NEW ENGLAND

Larry Underwood
was cracking up.

He walked all day long,
every day, from sunrise
to sunset.

(After Rita and after
his wife-out, he hadn't
been able to ride his
motorcycle anymore.)

He was suffering from
malnutrition, heat
prostration, and
plain old exhaustion.

The last week, he'd been
unable to sleep because
of the nightmares.

About Rita.

About the Park Man.

Come
on, Larry,
we'll get it
together,
Larry--

Paytimes, the vision of
the Park Man would recede.
Paytimes, it was the Big Alone
that went to work on him.



Though...was he alone?
Throughout his journeys,
he had a strong feeling
of "watched-ness."

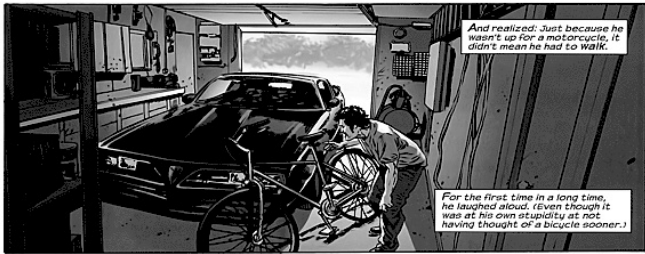
If someone's
there, why don't
you come out?
I won't hurt
you.

But nothing.



Maine saved his life. He
found a house in the shade
of a tree where there was
food and water, and it
was cooler.

He ate--cleaned himself
up--and slept, dreamlessly.



And realized: Just because he
wasn't up for a motorcycle, it
didn't mean he had to walk.

For the first time in a long time,
he laughed aloud. (Even though it
was at his own stupidity at not
having thought of a bicycle sooner.)



In North Berwick, he stopped
being afraid of whoever was
following him. He just wanted to
see somebody again. Anybody.

To your
health!

Wells
Vermont



In Wells, Larry flipped
a coin and turned
south on US 1.

And two miles down the road saw
it for the first time. This huge,
blue animal, lazy and slow.

It was the end
of the East.

The place where
the sea takes over.

Land's end.



He'd never seen so many birds in one place before.

The thought formed before Larry could push it away: Gulls are carrion-eaters. The pickings must be real good just lately.

He stood in awe for a half-hour. An hour.

I'm here, he thought.

Larry felt...overcome. Cleaned out and fresh.

At first, he thought the scream was coming from the gulls--

But it was behind him--

AAAAAHHH!!

JOE!!



Larry thought:
He's come to kill
me. This boy...

...what did I
ever do to
him?



He reacted
without
thinking--

(Larry felt instant pity.
The kid looked fierce,
but there was
nothing to him.)



Don't hurt
him! He's only
a little boy!



Let go of
the sticker,
kid.

Keeping his foot on the
boy's wrist was like
standing on a wounded,
vicious snake.



Let...it...
go, Joe.



Let it
go...

...or
I'll leave
you.



*She spoke calmly,
persuasively.*

*No one would hurt him.
No one would abandon him.
Everyone could be friends...
if he would let go of the
damn knife.*



*Eventually,
the boy did.*



Larry felt the old
defensive, self-
serving words rise--

I had to do it, it
wasn't my fault,
lady, he would've
killed me--



But he stopped himself.
The situation was what
the situation was, and it
could've ended much worse.

Larry thought: I think I've
changed somehow. I don't
know how much...

No one can tell what goes on in
between the person you were
and the person you become.
There are no maps of the
change. You just...come out
the other side.

Or you don't.



I'm Nadine
Cross. This is
Joe. We're
happy to meet
you.



Larry
Underwood.

You two
have been
following
me.



That was how Larry,
Nadine, and Joe met at
the end of the world.



**WELLS PUBLIC BEACH.
THAT NIGHT.**



"I want us to come with you, Larry, wherever you're going. I guess there's no way to be coy about it, under the circumstances..."



That boy... worries me, Nadine.

His knife's gone... but the world's full of knives, lying around, waiting to be picked up.



Nadine explained how she came across the boy in Epsom, sick on the lawn of a house from some animal bite, and nursed him back to health.

At first, she tried dressing Joe (which is the name she gave him), but he tore off everything except for his underpants.

He never talks, just growls and grunts.

Feral as he is, she's been able to control him--mostly.



I don't want to sound brutal...



...but would you consider leaving him behind?

No.

I couldn't do that.

Nadine was thinking that this man was a link in a chain she had been following for years, a chain that was now nearing its end.

I understand the danger, but...

If I left him, that would be the same as murder. I won't be a party to that. Too many have died to kill more.

I'll be responsible for his actions.

The surf rolled and boomed as Larry deliberated.

How much had he changed?

...

I think you're being dangerously softhearted, but... all right.

And hopefully Joe won't cut my throat in the middle of the night.

A sudden certainty that her words about the sanctity of life would someday soon rise up and mock her swept Nadine like a cold wind. She shuddered and thought: No. I'll not kill. Not that. Not ever.

To change the subject, she asked about the guitar Larry had found in a house up the shore, along with the food they'd just eaten.

Do you play?

Yeah, I do.

Let's see what we've got here...

Larry played, not just because Nadine wanted him to, but because sometimes it felt good to play.

Especially when you were on a beach, at night, with a bonfire and a pretty woman.

It was a beautiful guitar, and it made a beautiful sound.

Larry sang an old blues song he had learned as a teenager, and when he finished--



Larry played more--

Folk, and blues, and primitive rock and roll--

He played until his fingers failed him--



At which point:

It takes a lot of practice...



Larry shrugged inside.

He'll probably smash it to hell...

No, I don't think so.



In fact, what followed was one of the most amazing things Larry had ever experienced. The boy struck up "Jim Pandý" almost flawlessly, hooting the words rather than singing them.

At the same time, both he and Nadine knew: Joe had never played a guitar before in his life. He was copying Larry. Like some kind of...prodigy.



But he wasn't bearing down on the strings hard enough. And his chord changes were sloppy.

Here, let me show you--



All right.
All yours.

When you want a lesson, I'm here.

That night, Joe slept with his arms wrapped around the guitar he'd adopted.



Fine, Larry thought, you can't stab someone to death with a guitar. (Though, he supposed, it would make a pretty fair blunt instrument...)



The next morning, Joe played Larry's own song "Sally's Fresno Blues," and Nadine made oatmeal and hot tea for breakfast.



Larry's spirits buoyed.

Nadine was a beautiful woman, after all, and as for the boy...

...well, you couldn't not like someone who liked the guitar as much as Joe did.



They cycled along Route US 1, Joe leading the way, sometimes as far ahead of them as a mile.



At eleven o'clock, Larry and Nadine reached Ogunquit.

Why would they have blocked the road?

They must have tried to quarantine their town.

I bet we'll find another roadblock on the other end.



What they found, first, was the essence of honky-tonk beach resort. Summer cottages, clam shacks, gas stations, and Pairs Queens, all jammed together.

Not very pretty, is it?

No, but it was ours, once.

Now it's gone.



While Nadine made lunch, Larry explored the barn.



And found something carved in one of its support beams that...stirred an excitement in his stomach.

Good
For you,
Harold...



After lunch, he and Nadine went to a Honda dealership in Wells, and from the way the bikes were lined up, Larry deduced that two of them were missing.

Harold and Frances
strike again.



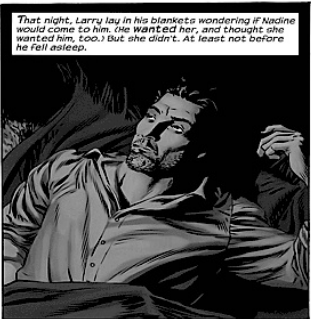
He also found a crumpled chocolate bar wrapper on the floor, nearby.

Which one had aimed
for the wastebasket
and missed?

Probably lovesick
Harold...



That night, Larry lay in his blankets wondering if Nadine would come to him. (He wanted her, and thought she wanted him, too.) But she didn't. At least not before he fell asleep.



Larry dreamed:

He, Joe, and Nadine were following the sound of someone playing a guitar through a field of corn...



...to a shack and an old woman who made him feel good. The way his mother had, when he was a little boy.

We'll say, I got me comp'ny. Come on closer so's I can see you.



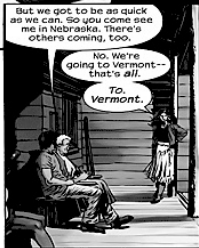
Larry felt they were in a kind of forever place, where the sun seemed to stand still, one hour from darkness.

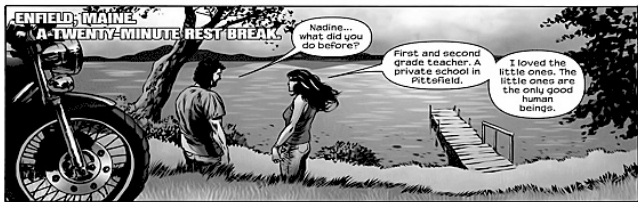
He wished they could stay. The man with no face couldn't get them in this place.



Boy, you like to have a swing on this old box o' mine?











**QUECHEE, OVER THE STATE LINE IN VERMONT.
THAT NIGHT.**

Lucy's story was simple and not much different from their own or the others they would hear.

Her people got sick. Her husband, her daughter. They died. She buried them.

She thought she might go mad from the loneliness and the senselessness of it all, especially when the dreams started.





Brr--ack man!
Chases me! Bad
dreams! Brr--ack
man dreams!

*This is crazy,
Larry thought...
we're all having--*



Lucy, do you
ever dream...
about a place in
Nebraska?

I had one dream
about an old black woman...
She said something
like, "Come see me..."



Joe, do you
ever dream about,
uh, corn? An old
woman? A little
house with a
porch?

Leave him
alone, Larry,
you'll upset
him.



A swing,
Joe? Made out
of a tire?



The swing!
The swing!
Yes!



We're all
having the
same--

Wait, why
are we all having
the same
dream?



JULY 19
AFTER/BIKING
ALL DAY

Oh,
God.

Oh,
no...

THE STOVINGTON PLAGUE CENTER.

route 7 to Rutland,
route 6
to Schuylerville,
route 29 to I-87
I-87 South to I-90
I-90 west

C.D.C.

everyone dead.
going to Nebraska
follow our route
watch for signs
H-L + F-G + Stu Redman
+ Glen Pappal Babinen
JULY 8

Harold, my
man, can't wait
to shake your
hand and buy you
a Payday.

Larry--

Larry looked down.

For whatever reason,
dreams or no dreams,
Nadine had fainted
dead away.

TO BE CONTINUED...



Lee Bermejo and Mike Perkins' cover concepts featuring Joe, Larry and Nadine.



**Lee Bermejo's final black and white line art
for this issue's cover.**



**Mike Perkins' black and white line art for
this issue's variant cover.**



STEPHEN KING **THE STAND**

SOUL
SURVIVORS
ISSUE
3



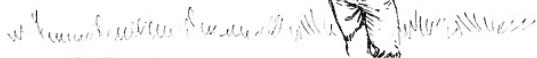
PREVIEW











Next: Sex, lies, and diaries...



"Mike Perkins' art...has so deftly given life to Stephen King's world."--Jesse Schedeen, ign.com



The end is nigh as a deadly plague sweeps the nation and widespread panic overcomes the dying masses of America in a terrifying and inexorable tide. Who will be left to rebuild on the ruins of their past lives as the ancient rivalry of Good vs. Evil has only just begun?

Based on the popular apocalyptic novel by celebrated author Stephen King, *The Stand* brings together critically acclaimed writer Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa (*Sensational Spider-Man*, *Angel: Revelations*, HBO's *Big Love*) and the gritty visuals of artist Mike Perkins (*Captain America*) to tell a tale which begins at the end of the world.

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FOR STRONG LANGUAGE & CONTENT

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